

Valley Bible Church New Attendee Welcome

Doctrinal Positions and Ministry Philosophies

Introduction

Valley Bible Church is an independent Bible Church. We are not a church based on a theological tradition (i.e., Reformed, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc.). Nor are we connected to a church denomination or association. We are a church that strives to look to the Bible, not tradition nor theological lineage, as our source of faith and practice.

Therefore, we believe doctrine is important. The Greek word for “doctrine” simply means teaching or instruction. For us, we want that teaching to come solely from the Word of God. We strive to have “sound doctrine” (Titus 1:9; 2:1) and “pure doctrine” (Titus 2:7). Individually and corporately, we strive to be “nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine” (1 Tim 4:6) and to “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect” (Titus 2:10).

We generally do not like theological labels. Labels tend to be derived from a theological tradition and not Scripture. Yet, we understand labels help to delineate one doctrinal position from another. So, we will describe ourselves by certain theological labels when we believe it is needed for those delineations. However, we may not be fully characterized by those labels in the specifics of that doctrine nor the zeal with which we hold to that doctrine.

Here, we explain VBC’s doctrinal positions and ministry philosophies so you can understand what we believe and how we “do church”. We will not give detailed systematic theological rationale for our doctrinal positions. Our website does that well, particularly our Position Papers.

We understand that not every believer will agree on every point of doctrine. If you choose to make VBC your church home, we are not requiring you to agree with us fully on every point. What we do ask is that you accept that these are VBC’s doctrinal positions and not teach or influence against the church’s doctrine within your spheres of influence.

The Bible

We believe that the Bible, Old and New Testaments, is the only inspired, infallible, authoritative revelation of God to man.

The Bible is the inspired, plenary, verbal, infallible, inerrant in the original manuscripts word of God. God is the source of Scripture and as such it takes on His qualities of inerrancy (without error) and infallibility (trustworthy). The Bible is inspired in the sense that the authors “were moved by the Holy Spirit” to write the very words of Scripture (2 Pet 1:21; Acts 1:16; 1 Cor 2:13). This divine inspiration is verbal (extending to the very words) and plenary (including all the words) (Matt 5:18; 22:31-32; Gal 3:16).

The Bible is authoritative (Matt 4:4, 7, 10) and fully sufficient for all matters of faith and conduct. It is the standard of faith and practice for every believer (Matt 5:18; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:20-21). It is the supreme and final authority in all matters on which it speaks (2 Pet 1:3; Matt 4:4; Heb 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 1 Pet 2:2; Psa 19:7-13; 119:9, 11, 24). All Scripture is for our practical instruction (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11).

The correct hermeneutic is the normal or plain, literal, grammatical, historical method of interpretation. This method takes the plain literal sense while understanding the historical, immediate, and wider contexts; type of literature; and the uses of figures of speech. We believe the consistent application of this hermeneutic to all of Scripture is needed to come to a correct understanding of Scripture. This plain, literal, grammatical hermeneutic has lead us to be dispensational and not covenantal in our view of

Scripture.

We believe Christians are free from the Old Testament Law (see our position paper titled “The Christian’s Obligation to the Law of Moses” for a comprehensive discussion).

The Godhead

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – having precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections, and worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence, and obedience (Matt 28:19; Mark 12:29; John 1:14; Acts 5:3-4; Heb 1:1-3).

All people and everything created, are totally dependent on God for everything (Rom 11:36). We believe the Genesis creation account as a historical event. We believe that God created everything out of nothing in six literal days.

God the Father

We believe that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, is related to the Lord Jesus Christ as Father, is related to Christians as Father, is related to the heavenly host as Father, and is related to the faithful in Israel as Father (Eph 3:14-16). God the Father is the eternal Father of God the Son, and the Son does the will of the Father in dependence upon God the Holy Spirit (John 5:23; 10:38; John 17:1-26; 20:17; Eph 1:17; 1 Pet 1:3).

God the Father has a relationship with Israel as Father of their nation. The chosen nation owes its origin and continued existence to His miraculous power and special care. As their Father, He loved, pitied, rebuked, and required obedience of His people (Ex 4:22; Hos 11:1; Mal 1:1-6).

God the Father is Father of all creation in the sense that He is Father of all that is created and responsible for its existence (1 Cor 8:6; James 1:17; Heb 12:9; Mal 2:10).

God the Father is Father to all who believe in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ in a very special and intimate sense. Only they who are saved through Jesus Christ have the privileges of children in God’s household. Only children of God can pray “Our Father” or express such endearments as “Abba Father.” (John 1:12; Rom 8:14-17).

God the Son

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and became man without ceasing to be God, in order to reveal God and redeem man (John 1:11-14; 1 John 1:1-2).

He was the creator (John 1:1-3; Eph 3:9). He led a sinless life (Heb 4:15). He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice (Rom 3:24-25). Our redemption is made sure by His literal, physical, resurrection from the dead (1 Pet 1:3-5).

The Lord Jesus Christ is now seated in the Heavens, exalted at the right hand of the Father, where, as High Priest for all Christians, He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate (Heb 9:24; 7:25; Rom 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2).

God the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, though omnipresent from all eternity, took up His abode in the world in a special sense on the day of Pentecost. According to the divine promise, dwells in every believer, and by His baptism unites all believers to Christ in one body (1 Cor 6:19; John 14:16-17; 16:7; Acts 1:8; Eph 2:22).

He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). He testifies of Christ, seeking to occupy believers with Him and not themselves or their experiences (John 15:26; 16:13-14). He restrains evil in the world to the measure of the divine will (2 Thess 2:7).

He regenerates, indwells, anoints, seals and baptizes all who are saved into the body of Christ as the point of salvation (Rom 8:9-11; 1 Cor 12:13).

He desires to fill and control us that we might walk in love and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 5:16; Eph 4:30; 5:18; Col 3:16). We break fellowship with the Holy Spirit through any act of mental, verbal, or overt sin and filling is restored solely by personal confession of that sin to God (1 John 1:9; 2:1-2; Rom 6:11-13).

He in grace, apart from human merit, bestows spiritual gifts to believers in this dispensation (Eph 4:11-16; Rom 12:4-8). We are cessationists. Some gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues and the gift of healing were temporary, given to demonstrate His approval of the establishment of the church (Heb 2:4). God currently performs supernatural acts as He wills, but not through an individual's possession of a supernatural gift (1 Cor 13:8).

Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God: that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical but also spiritual death which is separation from God (Gen 1:26-27; see also Rom 5:12).

Through the first man, Adam, spiritual death has been transmitted to the entire human race (Rom 3:10-19; Psa 51:5). Man, as spiritually dead, is subject to the power of Satan (1 John 3:8). Man in his unregenerate state can have no relationship with God and is thus devoid of any eternal home or true purpose in this life (Eph 2:1-3).

Man can enter a relationship with God only through God's provision for man's sin (John 14:6).

Salvation

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and rose again on the third day for our justification, thereby reconciling all who believe on Him to a Holy and Loving God (Rom 5:8-9; see also Rom 5:6-7; Acts 2:22-24).

Man in his sinful state, separated from God, cannot fellowship with or have any access to God and is therefore devoid of any purpose in his life (John 3:5; 3:18).

God has provided the only way to remove this sin by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place, and therefore pay for our sin (2 Cor 5:21; Titus 3:5).

It is necessary for man to individually receive Christ by personal repentance and trusting in Him as Lord and Savior. At the moment we trust in Him we pass out of spiritual death into everlasting life (John 1:12; 5:24; Eph 2:8-9; Rev 3:20). At the point of our acceptance of Christ we are made acceptable to God, in the same measure that God accepts Christ, loved as Christ is loved, linked to Christ and made one with Him forever (John 5:11-12; 17:23-26; Eph 2:4-9).

We can be completely assured that we are acceptable to God and have been reborn through faith in Christ as the very day we accept Him as Savior. That the assurance is not dependent upon our feelings but on the authority of the promises in God's written Word. That we do not receive this assurance because of our worthiness, goodness, or by following man's rules; but wholly upon the testimony of God regarding the eternal purpose of God to believers, the intercession of Christ in heaven for believers, the unchangeableness of the covenants of God, the regenerating work and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all who trust in Christ (1 John 5:11-13; Heb 13:5; John 6:47; Rom 8:35-39).

The Christian's Walk

We believe we are called by Christ to live a life that is yielded to the Holy Spirit who indwells us at the point of salvation and thus potentially overcomes the desires of our old nature (Eph 4:22-24; see also Rom 13:14; Gal 5:12-26; Col 3:1-10; 1 Pet 1:14-16).

We are given gifts at the point of salvation which enables us to be effective in service for Christ (1 Cor 12:1-3; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 4:10). Our purpose in this life is to glorify God and our mission is to make disciples.

We will experience spiritual growth through daily prayer, Bible study, obedience to God's Word, witnessing for Christ, trusting God moment by moment for every detail of life, and allowing the Holy Spirit to control and empower our lives (John 15:7-8; Acts 1:8; 17:11; 1 Pet 5:7; Gal 5:16-17).

God is a holy and righteous Father who cannot overlook the sin of His children and will when they persistently sin chasten and correct them in infinite love (1 John 3:5-9).

Apart from all human merit, God will present us faultless before His glory and conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Titus 2:14; Jude 24).

God has promised rewards in His Word, according to the faithfulness of each believer in his service for his Lord, and these rewards are bestowed at the judgment seat of Christ after He comes to receive us to Himself (1 Cor 3:9-15; 9:18-27; 2 Cor 5:10).

The Church

We believe that the universal church began at Pentecost and is distinct from Israel. The church is composed of all who are united by the Holy Spirit to the risen and ascended Son of God, and that we are all Spirit-baptized into one body whether Jews or Gentiles. Thus, being members one of another, we are responsible to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian prejudices and denominational bigotry and loving one another with a pure heart (Rom 12:5; Eph 1:20-23; 4:3-10; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Col 3:14-15).

The church, made up of all born-again persons of this dispensation as the bride of Christ, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air to ever be with Him (1 Cor 15:51-57; 1 Thess 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14; Eph 5:25-27).

Members of the universal church gather together in local assemblies or bodies (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Gal 1:2; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:11; 1 Cor 11:18-20; Heb 10:25). The purpose of the church is to glorify God (Eph 3:20-21). The Mission of the church is to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20).

Other Created Beings

We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless, spiritual beings – angels.

One of these angels, Lucifer, son of the morning, the highest in rank, sinned through pride thereby becoming Satan (Isa 14:12-17; Ezek 28:11-14; 1 Tim 3:16). A great company of angels followed him in his moral fall (Jude 1:6; 2 Pet 2:4). Satan is the originator of sin and led Adam and Eve into sin, thereby accomplishing their moral fall and subjecting mankind to his power (Gen 3:1-19; Rom 5:12-14; 2 Cor 4:3-4; 11:13-15; Eph 6:10-12). Satan was defeated at the cross but still rules as “god of this world” until bound at the second coming of Christ for a thousand years (Heb 2:14; Col 2:15). Satan will be loosed for a little season to again tempt the world and then be “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone” where he “shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (Rev 20:1-3; 20:10).

A great company of angels kept their holy estate and are before the throne of God, from where they are

sent forth as ministering spirits (Heb 1:13-14; 12:22; Luke 15:10; Rev 7:11-12).

Things to Come

We believe that God has revealed to His people through His written Word and gives evidence to us through the bodily resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, that the Christian has hope and can be assured that he will live with Christ throughout all eternity.

We believe in a Pre-Millennial second coming of Christ and a Pre-Tribulational rapture of the believers. The next event described in the Word of God is the coming of the Lord in the air to receive to Himself His own, the living and the dead Christians, and we will remain forever with Him in Heaven (1 Thess 4:13-17; 1 Cor 15:51-52; Phil 3:20-21). The Lord will then allow the remaining to enter the great tribulation culminating in fearful apostasy in Israel (Matt 24:15-21; Rev 6:1-19:21). The tribulation will be climaxed by the return of Christ to earth to reign for one thousand years (Rev 20:1-3).

Ordinances

Communion

We believe that we are to celebrate the communion service as a church body. We believe that it is a memorial service to bring us into remembrance of what God has done for us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the elements of the bread and juice, we are to remember both the body and blood of Christ. Communion is held once a month and led in accordance with the Scriptures (Matt 26:20-30; Mark 14:17-26; Luke 22:14-30; 1 Cor 11:18-34).

Baptism

We administer baptism by immersion to all born-again believers when requested by the person. We believe that this is an act of obedience following one's profession of faith. It gives an opportunity for a public profession of our relationship with Christ. Salvation is NOT dependent upon baptism.

Church Membership

Every adult who chooses to establish an active attendance at Valley Bible Church is considered a member. Attendance at Valley Bible Church means attendance at any officially recognized ministry of the church. It is understood that continued attendance indicates acceptance of the beliefs of Valley Bible Church. Membership will be terminated when it is determined by the Elders that an individual is no longer actively attending Valley Bible Church. Membership may also be terminated through church discipline.

Church Government (*Our church government is "Elder Rule".*)

Elders or Shepherds or Overseers (*We are complementarian vs. egalitarian.*)

We believe that elder rule is the form of local church government described and prescribed in Scripture.

Function of the elders – The elders are men who oversee of the church. They care for, feed, lead, guide, and protect the body. They are responsible to protect the doctrinal, moral, and directional purity of the church (Acts 20). The doctrinal purity is ensuring that the truth is being taught. Moral purity is ensuring that the truth is being practiced. Directional purity is ensuring the great commission (Matt 28:19-20) is being followed.

Qualifications of the elders – Only men who have proven themselves to be an example to the body (1 Pet 5) and meet the qualifications of 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1 will be recommended.

Selection of an elder – The candidate will be selected by the Elders. The names of the candidates will be made known to the membership one month prior to being confirmed by the Elders. If there are any

members who believe that this individual should not be selected for the office, he should first go to the candidate and lovingly express his reservation. If after having expressed his reservation, he continues to hold the same conviction, he is to share the reservation with an elder. If it is determined by the Board that what is shared is a valid reservation which would disqualify the candidate or if it is determined that the candidate lacks the support of the church, the candidate will be removed from consideration. If the candidate is not disqualified, he will be confirmed by the Elders.

Term – Once selected as an elder, the elder will automatically be reviewed each year by the congregation. This will be true unless the elder for some reason feels that he needs to remove himself from consideration.

Dismissal of an elder – If an individual has an accusation that would disqualify an elder, the matter will be handled in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17.

Deacons

Function of the deacon – Deacons are the officially recognized ministers of the church (Acts 6:1-6, Rom 16:1). They are responsible for the oversight of the day-to-day operations of the church. These individuals are selected for service to help organize and facilitate ministries. The deacons are subject to the elders and carry out their ministry under their authority. We believe that women can hold the office of deacon when leading and/or teaching women or children.

Qualifications of the deacon – The candidate will be selected by the Elders after evaluation of candidate's character and ministry giftedness (1 Tim 3:8-13). The names of the candidates will be made known to the membership one month prior to being confirmed by the Elders. If there are any members who believe that this individual should not be selected for the office, he should first go to the candidate and lovingly express his reservation. If after having expressed his reservation, he continues to hold the same conviction he is to share the reservation with an elder. If it is determined by the Board that what is shared is a valid reservation which would disqualify the candidate or if it is determined that the candidate lacks the support of the church, the candidate will be removed from consideration. If the candidate is not disqualified, he will be confirmed by the Elders.

Term – Once selected as a deacon, the deacon will automatically be reviewed each year by the congregation. This will be true unless the deacon for some reason feels that he needs to remove himself from consideration.

Dismissal of a deacon – If an individual has an accusation that would disqualify a deacon, the matter will be handled in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17.

VBC Ministry Philosophy Distinctives

We strive to align our ministry philosophies with Biblical precepts and principles. Yet our philosophies are not the Word of God and as such we are constantly evaluating if our philosophies are the best application of the Word of God. Over time our philosophies may change as we strive to glorify God as the elders care for, feed, protect, lead, and guide the body. Some of these ministry philosophies are restatements or expansions of our doctrinal beliefs and some are applications.

Leadership Distinctives

Per Scripture, we have a plurality of elders. One of those elders happens to be the primary teacher. For those not familiar with elder rule, they may think that the primary teaching elder is the “main pastor” or “senior pastor”. This is not how our church is organized. We have a plurality of elders, all of which are “shepherds” (same word as “pastor” in Ephesians 4:11 NASB). All our elders are “one among equals”. No one holds more authority than any other. Each elder is simply involved in different ministries

throughout the body. Yet they all work together to care for, feed, protect, lead, and guide the body.

We adopted this form of church government in 1982 in light of the Biblical teaching and the practice of the early church. Our elders are Dale Whitehead, Dan Roland, Lance Richards, Randy Thompson, David Rivas, and Chris Williams.

Unanimity of elder decision-making

The elders work together to oversee the church. While each elder is involved personally in certain ministries, as a group they are responsible for the entire church. There are two types of decisions the elders make. In both these decisions the elders strive for unanimity.

First are doctrinal decisions. These are decisions related to the interpretation of Scripture and setting the church's doctrinal positions. In these decisions the elders diligently (2 Tim 2:15) strive for sound, pure doctrine (Titus 1:9; 2:7) through individual and group study of the Scriptures. Since God authored Scripture (2 Pet 1:20-21), there is one meaning of Scripture and so the elders strive for the same mind and judgment (1 Cor 1:10) on all doctrinal decisions.

Second are non-moral decisions. These are the most prevalent decisions and are in areas of Biblical freedom – either areas where there is no Biblical command or in the application of a general command. In these decisions each elder strives to be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:1-3) through walking in the Spirit, dependence on the Word, prayer, and the outworking of the one-anothers to come to consensus. Since each elder is strong in faith (Rom 14:1-15:7) in non-moral areas and the application of general commands, no elder places their personal convictions in non-moral areas and the application of general commands on other elders nor the body. Therefore, we expect to see mutual submission and compromise in these areas. Once a decision is made and/or a direction set, all elders unanimously own the decision and support it publicly and privately in word, deed, and attitude because we trust the Lord and our fellow elders.

No term limits for elders and deacons

There are no terms of service for our elders or deacons. Each one is appointed to serve for as long as they remain willing, qualified, and functioning. We believe this helps the stability of our church and its leadership. Experienced leaders, working as a team, bring much needed depth to a local church.

Deacons overseeing specific ministries and advising elders

Our deacons do not function in simple capacities. They each oversee at least one official ministry area of our church and, importantly, are given a large degree of freedom to lead the ministry in the way that they see best. The reason for this is they have been tested for many years and found to be full of wisdom and yielded to the Holy Spirit. We have great confidence in our deacons and their leadership ability.

Also, our deacons serve in an advisory capacity to the elders. The elders seek the counsel and support of the deacons in church issues. Our leadership meetings are specifically designed to gain this assistance from our deacons and bring about a united church leadership.

Financial Distinctives

No offering taken

In the early 1980's, our church became concerned with applying 2 Corinthians 9:7 and sought for those who give to our church to do so cheerfully and not under compulsion. Since there is no biblical mandate to pass an offering plate, we decided to choose to eliminate the passing of the offering plate so that no one might feel tempted to give just because an offering plate was before them. We have boxes

attached to the walls in the rear of the auditorium for the purpose of giving to our church. This method has served us plentifully over the past twenty years.

All ministries are supported through our general fund

The reason that all ministries are supported through our general fund is because we do not want our ministries to compete against each other for funding. Also, it fosters unity within the church to have giving to be united and not segmented. We do not believe it is healthy for giving to be only to selected ministries.

Free resources

We see no biblical precedent for the fee-for-service enterprise underlying much of organized Christianity today. We cannot imagine Peter charging people to hear him speak or Paul expecting to be paid for consulting with church leaders. We do not charge for baptisms, weddings, funerals, music, counseling, sermons, etc.

We may pass along costs that we incur (for example, housing and food for a youth camp), but do not charge for our ministry. Indeed, charging money for ministry has certain negative effects on the quality of the ministry. For example, paying for counseling gives the impression that the counselor, like a mechanic, will solve the problems of the one in need. Paying for music equates it with the entertainment industry. We should not be like many, peddling the Word of God (2 Cor 2:17).

This attitude is also reflected in our website which has caused our web site to expand as a means of distributing good resources freely to the Christian community.

Conservative budgetary practices

The church budget is set by the projected ministry costs. However, there are spending limits which govern the distribution of funds. The budget is funded according to church income to the general fund over the previous four quarters. This protects us from spending more money than given and also provides a spending plan for the general fund giving.

Furthermore, the salaries are limited. The pastoral staff salaries are based upon the salary of a local community college teacher, with the equivalent experience and education. All pastoral staff function off the same pay system and none will be paid more than a teacher's salary. In fact, due to spending limits our staff have never been paid the full amount due them according to the pay scale, but none are discontent with the system. They believe this is a better system than having to choose between allocating money to salaries versus other ministry needs.

Ministry Distinctives

All attendees are considered members

We do not have a two-tier group attending our church. We consider all who attend our church to be members. There are no tests to take or forms to sign. The reason for this is that our elders feel a responsibility for all who involve themselves with Valley Bible. Since our church is elder ruled, the congregation does not vote and therefore the stability of the church is not threatened by this approach.

Emphasis on biblical counseling

We believe that God has given us His Word to produce spiritual maturity in the lives of believers through the power of the Holy Spirit. Because the Bible describes itself as true (John 17:17) and sufficient for this work (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:3), we believe it is sufficient to solve any spiritual problem.

As people accept the good news of Jesus Christ and follow Him through His Word, they will find the power to overcome any sin issue that has weighed upon them. Therefore, we see no need to look to other sources for finding victory over non-physical problems.

Avoidance of non-biblical political issues

When the Word of God speaks on things that also happen to be political, we strive to understand the Word clearly and teach it effectively. However, we believe that much of the church has sought to bring about change in our society through political means that will never deliver on its hopes. Our society will change as the people within the society change. The people in the society will change as their hearts and minds are changed, rather than laws become imposed onto them. While political muscle may alter laws within the society, unless people embrace the laws, the advancement will be short-lived.

Far worse, we see this effort by churches to bring political change as eroding the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. Too often, Bible believing Christians are seen as tied to a political party and using methods that are not appreciated, hindering our ability to speak God's Word to those who have been turned off by our politics. We do not want

More recently, churches have sacrificed the teaching of God's Word in order to unite politically with movements such as Mormonism, Prosperity teachers, the Faith Movement, Catholicism and Judaism. By diminishing the differences in doctrine, Christians have given tacit approval to erroneous belief systems...all for the sake of short-sighted political advancement. While Christians who chose political involvement have not sinned, we believe our church's best strategy for obedience to our Lord's commission in Matthew 28:19-20 is avoidance of the political arena. Our mission is to make disciples and we do not want our members or those they are seeking to evangelize to be confused about that mission.

Relaxed attire

We do not dictate or encourage any particular attire be worn to church. The reason for this is the Bible does not encourage any particular attire, other than modesty (1 Tim 2:9). As a result of this and as a reflection of the surrounding culture of the Antelope Valley, we find most attend church in attire very similar to what we would wear around town. Most in our church do not dress up to attend our services.

Baptism in spas, lakes, pools, etc.

One of the unique things about our church, particularly for people not from California, is that we baptize people in spas. When our church auditorium was constructed, it did not have a baptistry. Therefore, people have been baptized outside of the church buildings, usually at homes or sometimes on church trips.

We do what was done in the Bible, we make use of nearby bodies of water. We have used rivers, lakes and the Pacific Ocean but the most common method has been spas and pools. The reason is that many people have pools or spas, which can be warmed, in their backyard. This has brought an appreciation for special occasions for baptisms where small groups can gather and family and friends can be invited. These great times of fellowship have added meaning to the baptisms that we fear we would lose by putting a baptistry in our new auditorium. For those who think this is odd, just remember how baptism was done in the New Testament. Also, we do not require that a pastor do the baptizing since the Scripture does not make this limitation.

Freedom given on non-moral issues

One distinctive of our church is what does not exist. We seek to strictly adhere to what the Bible specifically calls sin or that which necessarily violates biblical principles. This means there are no written or unwritten rules outside of the Bible that governs appropriate conduct.

Indeed, we consider such additions to the Scripture to lead toward legalism and become destructive to developing mature believers. Like the Pharisees in the New Testament, legalists develop a form of religion that emphasizes the external life. Jesus warned us to beware of this (Matt 16:11-12).

It is important for the church to be healthy by giving freedom to people where the Scripture gives freedom. How each Christian chooses to live their lives in seeking to apply God's wisdom is important to the process of maturity.

Our sports ministry

One thing that many find remarkable about our church is that we fielded our own softball league from 1987-2022. Beginning in summer 2023, we started our own volleyball league. This is not just that many people like softball or volleyball, but they see it as a disciple-making outreach and an outflow of our growth groups.

Small Group Distinctives

Small group leaders have an unusually high level of ministry responsibility

Our Growth Groups are the core of our church ministry. Much of the essential personal ministry occurs in this context and the leaders of these groups are in a position to minister to a broad range of pastoral issues. They will have to teach the word, defend the faith, admonish the unruly, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak and be patient with all.

Because of our view of Growth Groups, we expect our leaders to be able to handle the basic duties of pastoral ministry, including teaching. Each group decides for themselves what topics they will cover and how the study will be conducted. There is no scripted teaching that our groups move through together. This is only possible when the group leaders have a high degree of spiritual maturity and leadership ability.

Missions Distinctives

Partnership with local churches in missionary effort

We believe in the local church and thus have come to emphasize a partnership with local churches in our missionary philosophy. This is more possible now than ever before due to mass communication and the reduction in travel time and expenses.

We were involved for years in Japan and for many years we have teamed with Iglesia Bíblica Bautista Dios Con Nosotros (DCN). in Mexicali, Baja, Mexico to serve the people of Mexico. Under the leadership of Mauricio Rivas, many from our church have served in building projects and in ministry training throughout the years.

We have partnered with a church in Asia.

Our own Deaf church

Also, we support Francisco Aceves as a full-time Deaf pastor to reach the Deaf of the Antelope Valley through our own Deaf church.

Sending own missionaries

There was a time when Valley Bible Church supported many missionaries at minimal amounts. We

came to feel that we had a very loose connection with these missionaries and found a much greater involvement in missions with our congregation has come from a more personal involvement with a few missionary efforts.

During the mid-1990s, one of our elders, Randy Thompson along with his wife, Rebecca, served four and one-half years at Hamadera Bible Church in Osaka, Japan. Over the years, we have sent others to Japan to serve in disciple-making and pastoral training.

We recently sent a couple to Asia.